

POWER PCs

Details	Last month's position	First reviewed	PC World-Bench 4	Price (ex VAT)	Warranty	Processor type/speed	RAM	Hard disk/capacity	Mother-board	Chipset	Modem	USB ports	Monitor	Screen size	Dot pitch	Max resolution @75Hz	Graphics card	Graphics chip	Graphics card memory	Sound card	Speakers	No of speakers/subwoofer	DVD-ROM speed	CD-RW read/write/rewrite rate	Operating system, software & other extras
<b>1</b> Evesham Axis GeForce4 2000 0800 038 0800 www.evesham.com	NEW	May 02	125	£1,399	2-year onsite 1-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/ 120GB	Asus A7V266-E	Via KT266A	56K	4	LG Flatron 915FT Plus	19in	0.24mm	1,600x 1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Audigy	Creative Inspire 5.1	5/Y	16x	40x/32x/10x	Windows XP Home, StarOffice 5.2
<b>2</b> Hi-Grade Meridian XP 2G PV05 020 8532 6100 www.higrade.com	NEW	May 02	125	£1,339	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	MSI K7N420	nVidia nForce	56K	2	LG Flatron 915FT Plus	19in	0.24mm	1,600x 1,200	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Onboard nForce	Cambridge CSW4300	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works
<b>3</b> Systemax Inspire A2000BA 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	NEW	May 02	121	£1,299	1-year onsite 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	256MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/ 100GB	MSI MS-6380LE	Via KT266A	56K	4	CTX EX 950F	19in	0.25mm	1,600x 1,200	Gainward GeForce4 Ultra/750	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	128MB	Creative Audigy	Videologic ZXR-500	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP Home, games bundle
<b>4</b> Mesh Matrix 1900 T15X 020 8208 4702 www.meshcomputers.com	1	Feb 02	121	£1,299	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/ 1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	Asus A7A266-E	Ali-Magik	56K	4	Mitsubishi DPRO 920	19in	0.24mm	1,600x 1,200	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	24x	32x/24x/10x	Windows XP, Microsoft Works Suite 2001
<b>5</b> Systemax A1900FZ Pro 0870 729 7364 www.systemaxpc.co.uk	2	Feb 02	117	£1,289	1-year onsite 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/ 1.6GHz	256MB DDR RAM	IBM/ 60GB	MSI MS-6380LE	Via KT266A	56K	2	CTX PR960F	19in	0.24mm	1,600x 1,200	Gainward GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	32x/16x/10x	Windows XP Home, games bundle
<b>6</b> PC World Advent 3969SP 0870 546 4464 www.pcworld.co.uk	4	Feb 02	120	£1,216	1-year onsite, 2-year return to base	AMD Athlon XP 1900+/ 1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	Gigabyte GA-7DX	Irongate 4 761	56K	2	Samsung 957DF	19in	0.25mm	1,600x 1,200	Leadtek GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Labs Live 5.1	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	32x/16x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2001
<b>7</b> Best Price Poweroid 2008 020 8904 3347 www.poweroid.com	NEW	May 02	119	£1,599	3-year return, to base, 2-year parts and labour	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	IBM/ 120GB	Soyo K7V Dragon +	Via KT266A	56K	2	Iiyama VM Pro 454	19in	0.25mm	1,600x 1,200	ATI Radeon 8500	ATI Radeon 8500	64MB	Onboard CMI	Creative Inspire 5.1	5/Y	16x	24x/8x/4x DVD-R 2x	Windows XP Pro
<b>8</b> NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 A2000+ 0870 010 6326 www.nec-online.co.uk	NEW	May 02	120	£1,699	3-year onsite	AMD Athlon XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	512MB DDR 1.67GHz	Seagate/ 80GB RAM	MSI K7N420	nVidia nForce	56K	4	NEC HR19 MultiSync	19in	0.25mm	1,600x 1,200	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4600	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 460	64MB	Creative Labs Live 5.1	Cambridge DTT3500	5/Y	16x	24x/8x/4x DVD-RW 1x	Windows XP Home, Word/Money, Britannica, games bundle
<b>9</b> Evesham Axis 1900+ Ti5 0800 038 0800 www.evesham.com	5	Feb 02	124	£1,599	2-year onsite, 1-year parts and labour	AMD Athlon/XP 1900+/ 1.6GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Western Digital/ 100GB	Asus A7V266-E	Via KT266A	56K	4	Samsung SM170T	17in flat-panel	0.26mm	1,280x 1,024	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	nVidia GeForce3 Ti 500	64MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge DTT2200	5/Y	16x	40x/24x/10x	Windows XP, Star Office
<b>10</b> PC World Advent 3978BT0 0870 546 4464 www.pcworld.co.uk	NEW	May 02	119	£1,616	1-year onsite	AMD Athlon/XP 2000+/ 1.67GHz	512MB DDR RAM	Maxtor/ 80GB	Gigabyte GA-7VTXE	Via KT266A	56K	2	Samsung SyncMaster 171S	17in flat-panel	0.264mm	1,280x 1,024	nVidia GeForce4 4400	nVidia GeForce4 Ti 4400	128MB	Creative Audigy	Cambridge CSW4300	5/Y	16x	32x/16x/10x	Windows XP Home, Microsoft Works Suite 2002

**1** Evesham Axis GeForce4 2000

After several months of near misses, it's nice to see Evesham back at the top of the chart. All of this month's Power PCs employ an Athlon processor, with the top three opting for the Athlon XP 2000+. Although the latter chip runs at a clock speed of 1.67GHz, AMD estimate its performance



to be equivalent to the 2GHz Intel Pentium 4 chips. As proof, the Evesham's WorldBench score of 125 is higher than any of those generated by Intel's finest. The 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM is fast becoming the standard for optimum Windows XP performance. While the huge 120GB hard drive, will be more than enough storage for all but the most dedicated video enthusiasts.

The GeForce4 Ti 4600 graphics card comes with a gigantic 128MB of DDR RAM onboard, so it's no surprise to find frame rates going through the roof. Those who rely on graphics intensive applications will relish the performance.

The included LG Flatron 915FT Plus monitor wins the Recommended award in our

← The Evesham Axis is the Best Buy with an excellent all-round system that fights off the competition

19in monitors chart on page 120. The Creative Audigy sound card and Inspire 5.1 speaker system are ideal for those who appreciate the best in audio playback, while the 32-speed CD-R facilities, array of USB and FireWire ports and spacious interior and documentation are all impressive.

It's pretty hard to fault the Evesham and this well-priced system is close to the perfect Power PC.

**2** Hi-Grade Meridian XP 2G PV05

In a fierce battle for first place, the Hi-Grade Meridian was only just pipped to the top spot by the Evesham. Both systems sprinted to an identical WorldBench score of 125. Backing up the Athlon XP 2000+ is 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM.

The 80GB Maxtor hard drive is big but not actually the biggest in the chart, and



↑ The Hi-Grade Meridian only just misses out on the Best Buy award with a well-specified system

the Hi-Grade also loses out to a rival on drive facilities – the LG's 24-speed CD-R speed is good, but doesn't match the Evesham's sizzling 32-speed writing ability.

Both machines use the 19in LG Flatron 915FT monitor, but the Hi-Grade's

GeForce3 Ti 500 graphics card can't quite keep up with the frame rates of the GeForce4 range. The audio is also a bit disappointing, and despite the excellent Cambridge speakers, the Creative Audigy sound card would have been preferable to the onboard nForce audio controller.

Despite these slight niggles, the Meridian is a first class performer with some heavyweight components.

**3** Systemax Inspire A2000BA

Traditionally the top Power PCs have tended to deliver blistering pace with scant regard for cost.

This month's top six all have price tags under £1,400, but pack an unbelievable amount of processing power. The Systemax proves no exception, employing the AMD Athlon XP 2000+ chip to generate a high score of 121 in our WorldBench tests.

This result might have been more impressive had the Inspire been equipped with 512MB rather than 256MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM. However, it offers a massive 100GB of storage space and an excellent 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 card. The CTX monitor is a good 19in screen,



↑ With very good specs and a lot of processing power, the Systemax Inspire is a strong contender

**POWER PCs**

while the Creative Audigy sound card and Videologic speakers ensure the audio won't let you down.

Carefully arranged internally, and equipped with plenty of USB and FireWire ports, there's little to fault on the Systemmax's presentation.

**4 Mesh Matrix 1900 Ti5X**

It's of considerable credit to Mesh that the Matrix 1900 continues to command a place near the top of the chart after four months. Indeed, the ever decreasing price tag has helped the Matrix just as much as its surprisingly good WorldBench score of 121. With the majority of its rivals following suit, the 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM now looks like an invaluable addition.

With only an 80GB hard drive you could be forgiven for thinking that storage space was lacking in gigabytes. But we'd challenge the majority of users to fill up this space fast.

The 19in Diamond Pro 920 monitor produces a crisp display and, although the GeForce3 Ti 500 has now been overtaken by the brand new GeForce4 Ti family, it remains a fast card capable of high frame rates. The Creative Audigy sound card is



currently without equal, and the range of USB and FireWire ports give the Matrix a good supply of connectivity options.

**5 Systemmax A1900FZ Pro**

The Systemmax is the slowest model in the Power PC category, but retains a place in the top five due to its competitive pricing strategy and high calibre components.

The lack of speed is surprising considering the presence of the AMD Athlon XP 1900+ processor, but the 256MB of RAM could be a factor as it is just half the amount the majority of Power PCs come with. In truth, this PC is fast enough to satisfy the desires of all but the most demanding users.

The 19in CTX monitor may be 18 months old, but it remains the best on the market, and the pairing of the Creative Audigy and DTT2200 speaker system is fairly hard to beat. Cheap and well worth a look, the Systemmax is still a good buy.

**6 PC World Advent 3969SP**

With a rock-bottom price tag which only just misses qualifying it for Budget PC status, the Advent has made a brave stab at holding on in the chart. However, now it is into its fourth month, the ageing process is finally taking its toll on the Advent's specifications.

The WorldBench score of 120 is still an impressive achievement from the Athlon XP 1900+ chip, and the 512MB of DDR (double data rate) and 80GB hard drive are more than you could reasonably expect at this price level. Look elsewhere,

← The Mesh Matrix drops its Best Buy award in the face of stiff competition



↑ The Systemmax A1900FZ is a slow system but its low price and good components keep it in the top five

however, and you begin to see why the Advent can't compete with the new blood.

The 19in Samsung is solid, although no match for the LG and Iiyama models found elsewhere. Likewise, the GeForce3 Ti 500 is a notch below the new GeForce4 cards in terms of games performance, and the Creative Live 5.1 sound card can't reproduce the clear audio of the FireWire-enabled Audigy.

If you are tempted by this machine, it is a 'build to order' system, so ask for it as such when you visit the store.

↓ The PC World Advent drops two places this month owing to new entries at the top of the chart



**POWER PCs**



↑ The Best Price Poweroid offers a DVD-RAM drive that will help make up for the PC's lack of speed

**7 Best Price Poweroid 2008**

The Poweroid 2008 is another well-constructed PC that will appeal to the richer of purchaser. If the WorldBench score of 119 from the Athlon XP 2000+ processor and 512MB of memory is faintly disappointing, the 120GB hard drive and advanced Pioneer DVD-RAM drive certainly demand attention. The crisp 19in Iiyama monitor is a smooth performer, albeit not quite as attractive as the CTX and LG screens. The ATI Radeon 8500 is an unusual choice, but only the brand new GeForce4 Ti cards consistently better its high frame rates.

**8 NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 A2000+**

Very much a close relation of the Best Price Poweroid, the PowerMate just about eclipses its rival – but inflates its own price tag in the process. Speed is an issue again, and the repeat pairing of an Athlon XP 2000+ and 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM produces a similarly anticlimactic WorldBench score of 120.

↓ The NEC PowerMate is a good performer, but its price lets it down



**PC WorldBench: Power PCs**

(longer bars are better)	25	50	75	100	125	→ faster
WorldBench 4						
Evesham Axis GeForce4 2000						125
Hi-Grade Meridian XP 2G PV05						125
Evesham Axis 1900+ Ti5						124
Systemmax Inspire A2000BA						121
Mesh Matrix 1900 Ti5X						121
PC World Advent 3969SP						120
NEC PowerMate i-Select XL4 A2000+						120
Best Price Poweroid 2008						119
PC World Advent 3978BTO						119
Systemmax A1900FZ Pro						117

The 19in NEC-branded monitor is good but not on a par with the vibrant screens that top our Monitors chart, although the 64MB GeForce4 Ti 4600 is an excellent component that guarantees top frame rates. The Pioneer DVD-RAM drive adds functionality and the 80GB hard drive is a huge amount of gigabytes to fill.

As with all NEC PCs, you get excellent backup support, plenty of software and clearly written instruction manuals.

**9 Evesham Axis 1900+ Ti5**

The Evesham Axis coaxes a superb WorldBench score of 124 out of its AMD Athlon XP 1900+ processor and 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM, but manages to price itself out of the top eight.

There's still plenty to tempt buyers, though, and the Samsung flat-panel display will make a handsome addition to any desktop despite being limited to a resolution of 1,280x1,024. The GeForce3 Ti 500 has since been superseded, although its performance is still superior to the majority of graphics cards on the market. The Creative Audigy sound card and hefty DTT2200 speaker system are as good as any combination on the market though, and the 100GB hard drive will allow you to take full advantage of the DVI (digital visual interface).

**10 PC World Advent 3978BTO**

For anyone prepared to pay an extra £300 for a flat-panel display this is a fairly capable system from PC World. It's true that the WorldBench score of 119 isn't quite the best from an Athlon XP 2000+ chip and 512MB of DDR (double data rate)



↑ The Evesham Axis slips from fifth place because of its high price

RAM, but the Advent's specification list does represent what's hot in the PC industry. The 128MB GeForce4 card is an excellent addition, as is the Creative Audigy and Cambridge CSW4300 sound system. The 80GB hard drive is spacious, although the onsite warranty covers you for just one year. This system is built to order, so bring this to the sales staff's attention when you go into the store to buy.

↓ With a 17in flat-panel the PC World Advent looks good but its not worth an extra £300



**Video editing**

To get the best from your DV (digital video) camcorder you should make sure your PC has a FireWire port, which may mean buying and installing a card for around £50. Some camcorders, such as the Canon MV400i, come with this card as standard. A FireWire port means that video transfers to your PC faster. If your camcorder also has a DV input, you can send edited films back to it, to be stored on tape rather than on your PC.

When you invest in a FireWire video capture card choose wisely, as some come with useful extras. The Matrox RT2500 comes with Adobe Premiere and realtime editing facilities, while

a cheaper solution is the Pinnacle Studio Deluxe that offers a complete hardware/software solution at a third of the price of the Matrox.

If you plan to use your PC for video editing, you will need a high spec machine, with a fast processor, plenty of RAM and a capacious hard drive. Hard drive space is cheap so get as much as you can. As a guideline, 50GB will allow you to store about four hours of digital video. Extra speed could be useful, so if you're looking for maximum results, consider upgrading your drive interface to SCSI or Raid.